

KILLING A BRUTAL SAVAGE

TWO MEN RIDE INTO THE HEART OF MATABELELAND.

The Wizard Shot Who Was Responsible for the Massacre of White Settlers.

(Concluded.)

It is little short of a miracle that the god hunters were not now discovered. Good luck was still with them, however. When they had arrived within 600 yards of the M'imo's cave they found their way blocked by a large party of warriors sitting in the shadow of some rocks.

Most men would have given up the expedition at this point, but both Burnham and Armstrong were made of sterner stuff. They knew that an indaba, or council, was in progress, and that the Matabele were not likely to stir for some time.

Once more they slowly retreated, and, after making a short circuit they wheeled and started again for the summit, fully realizing that unless they could get to the cave at once the opportunity might be lost forever. At any time the women might notify the Matabele of the presence of the two men.

Burnham and Armstrong now approached the three kopjes from the east instead of from the south, as they had originally intended. They saw from the clump of bushes where they had tied their horses that the face of the center kopje was covered with bushes and small trees, which practically concealed its precipitous nature. They also saw that at the foot of the western kopje there was a large kraal of conical huts, where the Impis were "doctored" before going to war. This complicated matters still further. Between them and the foot of the hill, about 100 yards away, was an open space of grass which they must cross.

"Now for it!" said Burnham. Armstrong smiled grimly. Both men tightened their belts and prepared for that last dash. Around them at the foot of the kopjes were probably a thousand of as cruel barbarians as Africa can boast of.

According to the programme of the two desperate men not a shot was to be fired. It was to be a seizure. If not a seizure, the knife. If not the knife, as a last desperate resort, the rifle.

Pausing to take a long breath, the two men, crouching low, ran swiftly out in the tall grass of the open space, stumbling here and there over the hidden boulders, but keeping ever in a direct line for the summit. Just beyond the open glade they came upon a steep path which somewhat resembled a rude staircase. It was, fortunately, invisible from below, and Burnham and Armstrong passed rapidly and noiselessly along the ascent.

At the very summit were two huge blocks of stone upheaved by some prehistoric earthquake. They leaned together in the shape of an "A" tent, forming an opening about four feet in height and trending downward. The men were on their hands and knees now. They crawled cautiously across the last intervening boulder right up to the dark and foul-smelling entrance to the M'imo's cave.

Then together, like two great cats, they dropped softly into the darkness. The rocky aisle, a few paces in advance, turned sharply to the left. They cautiously peered around this "neck."

There, in the semi darkness, sat N'dubi, the M'imo of the Matabele, gaunt and savage, crouched like a spider in a noisome web.

Suddenly he began an incantation. The half-muttered words of the chant resembled the mindless ravings of a bushman's dream. With every sway of his body forward his gree-grees and armlets of dead men's bones sounded like the angry warning of a rattlesnake.

Before he had finished the chant he sprang to his feet, tall and bony, and with blazing eyes. He had seen in the gloom the white faces of Burnham and Armstrong. There was no opportunity for seizure. The long dusky arms

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